



THE CHELSEA SOCIETY

Registered Charity 27626

Autumn Bulletin 2020



This Bulletin is printed and distributed to members twice a year, and electronic mailings are sent to members at approx. monthly intervals. The best way to keep up to date with the activities of the Society is via its website at www.chelseasociety.org.uk You can also follow The Chelsea Society on Instagram, where we now have 651 Followers.

Please encourage your friends and neighbours to join the Society. They can join easily by visiting our website and clicking on **“Join Us.”**
They do not have to be resident in Chelsea.

A Message from the Chairman, Dr. James Thompson

Dear Member,

2020 has turned out to be the most extraordinary year since the Society was founded more than 90 years ago. We would have to go back to 1918 to find a comparable impact, but even at the height of the Spanish flu, when the death rate exceeded the birth rate, Chelsea kept going, and crowds of over 20,000 watched football matches.



The COVID-19 restrictions today have caused The Chelsea Society to cancel all our meetings and lectures, and all the interesting visits that we had arranged. We have not been able to have a drink together after lectures, and COVID has even restricted those impromptu everyday interactions which make Chelsea such a special place to live. Instead we have had to learn to use "Zoom" to keep in touch with each other. The Society's Council has had several meetings with that technology, and we have used it to deliver interesting lectures on the Ranelagh Garden, on NATO, on Legal London, and most recently on The Chelsea Physic Garden.

We all hope that London will soon return to normal, but who knows when? We will follow the official advice and know that you will be making your own assessment of the risks. Our AGM will take place on 30th November and we will let you know as soon as we can whether that will be a Zoom meeting, or a real meeting in Chelsea Old Town Hall with a limited number of participants, and as a Zoom meeting for those who cannot be accommodated. In the meantime, the Officers and Council are doing all we can to continue the important work of the Society on town planning issues, representing your interests to RBKC, and arranging our own lectures, meetings, and virtual visits.

I am not going to end by telling you to keep safe, since as adults you can exercise your own judgement. I would rather, in the Chelsea tradition, hope that you are living as entertaining a life as possible, and that we can discuss your adventures when we next meet.

PLANNING

PLANNING COMMITTEE

On 6th May 2020 Michael Stephen retired as Chairman of the Planning Committee after five years, but remains Vice-chairman of the Society. The new Chairman of the Committee is Sir Paul Lever KCMG, who remains the Committee Member for Brompton-Hans Ward. Other Members are: Martyn Baker (Chelsea Riverside), Jules Turner (Royal Hospital), and Michael Parkes (Stanley).

Cabman's Shelter



The Society has for some time been concerned that the cabman's shelter on the Embankment near the Albert Bridge was falling into serious disrepair, so we urged RBKC to serve a notice under section 215 of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 requiring the owners to repair and maintain it.

This notice has now been served, thanks to support from Alison Jackson, one of the Riverside Ward Councillors, and we understand that the owners are engaging contractors to do the work.

We had offered (subject to contract) to buy the shelter if the owners could not afford to take proper care of it, but it seems that this will not now be necessary.

PLANNING

Royal Brompton to leave Chelsea?

We have heard yet again that the Royal Brompton is considering moving out of Chelsea to a site on the South bank as part of St. Thomas's hospital. On 21st August 2020 the Chairman of the Society made the following statement:



"For nearly 100 years the Chelsea Society has fought to maintain and improve the amenities of Chelsea. Foremost among these is a world-class tertiary hospital. We know that it is expensive to maintain and operate this hospital, so we have always engaged constructively with the Trustees when they have wished to realise some of the value of their land. However, a complete closure of the hospital and transfer to another site would be a hugely expensive and disruptive process and would deprive Chelsea of an institution of which it is proud. The site is classified as community land, and we would oppose any attempt to turn it into a luxury housing estate."

Proposed redevelopment of South Kensington Station

On 24th August 2020 the Chairman of the Society's Planning Committee, Sir Paul Lever, wrote to the planning officer at RBKC as follows:

"I am writing on behalf of the Chelsea Society to register our objection to the planning application submitted by Native Land and Transport for London for the re-development of South Kensington Station. The Chelsea Society, founded in 1927, exists to protect the interests of all those who live and work in Chelsea and to preserve and enhance the unique character of this part of London, and we have around a thousand members."



Our views on the re-development of the station are set out in detail on the society's website at

<https://chelseasociety.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/TCS-submission-on-SOUTH-KENSINGTON-STATION.pdf>

To summarise:

- South Kensington is one of London's most iconic underground stations. Its restoration and improvement should be conservation-led and should reflect the station's original heritage and style.
- The priority should be to re-furbish the station itself so as to increase its capacity and to provide step-free access to the platforms.
- Any further development should be along the lines of the Planning Brief written in 2015 by Deloitte Real Estate for Transport for London and reviewed by RBKC planning officers. TfL originally undertook to work with local amenity groups to develop proposals for the site on the basis of this brief, and it is regrettable that TfL has reneged on this commitment.
- We object to the current application on the grounds that it fails to meet the objectives of the Local Plan, the London Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework. It would inflict significant harm on the listed buildings which surround the station and on the Conservation Area within which it is located. It would involve the unnecessary destruction of heritage assets. It would impose buildings of unacceptable bulk and height. It would add an unnecessary volume of retail and office space, when the priority of a public body like TfL should be affordable housing, and it would cause acute levels of traffic congestion.

We therefore urge the Council to reject this application and to encourage Native Land/TfL to submit an alternative plan which is more respectful of the heritage of the area and of the station itself.

PLANNING

Quality Review Panel

RBKC has now decided to appoint a nominee of The Chelsea Society and a nominee of The Kensington Society to the Quality Review Panel to provide advice on new buildings and major alterations in the Borough. The Chelsea Society has appointed Julian Turner, who is a local architect and a member of the Society's Council, and Planning Committee.

This is a welcome development, which resulted from expressions of surprise and concern by both Societies at the lack of transparency and consultation by the Council in making appointments to the Panel.

The Chelsea Society's position is that a Panel established to advise the Council on architecture will of course have regard to the well-established principles of architecture applicable anywhere, but Chelsea is a special place, and we considered that the membership of the Panel was too heavily weighted toward people who do not live in Chelsea.



Street Works



On 15th May the Society received a letter from RBKC informing us of their "New and improved walking and cycling plans to help social-distancing post-lockdown, and we expressed surprised that the Chelsea Society was not consulted before these measures were announced.

These included "Wider pavements, new and improved cycling routes, safe shopping and school streets and speed restrictions which are essential to get children to school, make sure our businesses are accessible and get our Borough moving."

RBKC responded by requesting a meeting by Zoom with the Society, which was held on 11th June. It was attended by 41 people including the Leader of the Council, Cllr. Elizabeth Campbell, the Lead-member for Planning, Cllr. Thalassites, and four other Councillors.

The Society is not willing to allow Coronavirus to be used as an excuse to take precipitate action with long-lasting effects on our community, without any attempt to involve local people in the process. The Zoom meeting on 11th June has shown that we can now be quickly consulted by electronic means.

81 – 103 King's Road (The Marks and Spencer building)

The owners of this building have consulted us about their plans for its re-development. They have an ambitious design which would involve an internal courtyard and atrium and a rooftop grass space.

The inside would be retail and some offices. Marks and Spencer apparently no longer need a store of this size and it is unclear whether they would be interested in including a smaller shop in the new project. We told the developers that we recognised the merits of their design, but that we were concerned about the extra height of the proposed building and the rather slab-like quality of its façade.



PLANNING

King's Walk



We have also talked to the developers of the King's Walk building in the King's Road. The design they have in mind is attractive and would certainly be a huge improvement on the existing building.

But we have expressed concerns about the need to centre it opposite Royal Avenue and on the height implications for residents of Anderson Street and Tryon Street. We are conscious that if planning permission is given for one taller building in the King's Road, applications for others might follow. One of the King's Road's charms is its low height and open feel.

Dovehouse Green

RBKC has identified money to pay for the refurbishment of Dovehouse Green and has submitted proposals. The Chelsea Society is represented on the consultative group which the Council has established to review the options.

New flowerbeds, different configurations of the benches, some reduction in the height of the trees and other improvements are under consideration, but the character of the Green as a site of rest and relaxation will be retained.



Kensington Forum Hotel

RBKC rejected the planning application for the replacement of the Forum Hotel in Cromwell Road by a twin tower skyscraper, but the project was called in by the Mayor London who wanted to approve it.

His decision was annulled on Judicial Review, but the developers have submitted a new proposal retaining many of the features of the original. We have registered our objection, on the basis that the changes don't mitigate the defects of the earlier version, namely excessive mass and damage to local views.

Lots Road

The Council is still refusing to take proper enforcement action against repeated breaches of the Construction Traffic Management Plan by lorries delivering to and from the huge building site. In particular they are unwilling to install adequate CCTV coverage.

Although under the latest CTMP the Developers are allowed to close off the westbound lane alongside the Power Station façade (opposite business premises) to accommodate their many arriving Heavy Goods Vehicles, Tideway on the adjacent construction site are still all too often making use of the residential end of Lots Road East to hold back their large scale delivery vehicles because of on-site construction delays at Cremorne Wharf - thus blocking the highway as they double park alongside pay and display bays. While Tideway shut down briefly at the height of the pandemic the Power Station site did not do so, meaning that residents in lock-down had no way to escape the noise, disruption and pollution generated not only by these two sites but by building work on individual houses which the Council has made no effort to curtail over the last six months.

Involvement in planning decisions

RBKC are looking at ways in which the public could be better involved at the early stages of the planning process, particularly for big projects. This is an issue which we have long urged them to address. Councillor Husband, the Chairman of the RBKC Planning Committee, has convened two Zoom meetings with the Kensington and Chelsea Societies to discuss the options.

EVENT UPDATES

Online lecture on the Ranelagh Garden



May 27th 2020

This was a lecture by Jonathan King, who is Von Hügel Fellow at the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge.

It was attended by 40 members, who were able to see and hear the speaker and the photographs, and were able to interact with each other.



Online lecture on NATO

29th July 2020

A lecture by General Sir Adrian Bradshaw KCB OBE, former Deputy Supreme Allied Commander of NATO forces in Europe on "Current Security challenges facing NATO and the UK." Sir Adrian is now Governor of the Royal Hospital Chelsea.

Essay Competition

The Chelsea Society launched an essay competition for all state and independent primary schools in Chelsea with the aim of encouraging youthful interest in this special part of London. The theme was 'My Chelsea' and the competition was restricted to pupils in Years 5 and 6.

The competition was arranged by Fleur de Villiers, and the Society is happy to announce that Cameron House School produced the winning entry (by Oliver Butterworth), while Redcliffe School (Josephine Kloch) was second. Christ Church (Penelope Stopford) and Holy Trinity (Richard Raj) were placed joint third.

All the essays can be read via links on the Chelsea Society website.



Online talk on the Chelsea Physic Garden

29th September 2020

Members enjoyed a talk about the history of the Chelsea Physic Garden and some of the particularly interesting plants to be found there.



EVENT UPDATES

Virtual Tour of Legal London



1st September 2020

Emma Matthews, a Blue Badge Guide, and former Barrister took us on a virtual walk around The Royal Courts of Justice, the Inns of Court, and the other legal landmarks of London

Photography Competition

5th October 2020

The Chelsea Society was invited by Alison Jackson, a Chelsea Councillor and well-known photographer, to participate in a photographic competition which she had organised.

The Society gave prizes for the best three photographs taken in Chelsea, which were presented by the Chairman, Dr. James Thompson, at the Chelsea Physic Garden on 5th October 2020. https://www.dropbox.com/s/u7g2vnnykkfytps/T___0010_1%20FINAL%202.mp4?dl=0

The first prize was won by Isabel Paget for her photograph of the houseboats at Chelsea Reach.

This is the second year in which The Chelsea Society has offered prizes for this competition.



FURTHER INFORMATION

You can follow The Chelsea Society on our website - chelseasociety.org.uk and on Instagram @thechelseasociety where we now have 651 followers!

Our mailing address is: 30 Paradise Walk, London SW3 4JL

The Secretary's e-mail is secretary@chelseasociety.org.uk and her telephone number is 07598 534290

Copyright © 2020 The Chelsea Society. All rights reserved.



THE CHELSEA SOCIETY